

## CHAPTER ONE

# Hunting and Hunter Education

## Learning Objectives

*At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:*

- A. State the purpose of Hunter Education.
- B. Identify the agency responsible for offering Hunter Education and for managing wildlife in Montana.
- C. Give two reasons why Hunter Education is important.
- D. List four social and ecological benefits to hunting and provide three personal reasons why you hunt.



## Introduction

Welcome to **Hunter Education**! You are probably here for any one of several reasons. You might be a beginning hunter who is required to pass the course before you can get your first hunting license. Or, you might be an experienced hunter who wants to learn more about firearm safety, wildlife and hunting. Whatever the reason, you probably have lots of questions about this course, about hunting in Montana and about hunting in general. Hopefully, we'll be able to answer them for you.

You will learn a great deal about hunting, firearms and wildlife in this class. You will learn that hunting involves more than shooting and killing an animal. You will also learn that safe and responsible hunting involves more than just following a few rules.

The **learning objectives** are highlighted at the beginning of each chapter. These are the points you need to know to become a responsible hunter and to pass the written test. But there are also additional points in each chapter that will teach you more about certain topics.

## What will you learn in this course?

Many hunters hunt their whole lives and never stop learning. In fact, you will probably learn something new every time you hunt. This class is only an introduction. It's your responsibility to get any additional information from other sources.

To learn more about hunting, outdoor skills, and other important subjects talk to your Hunter Education Instructor, your parents or **mentors** (someone you look up to and respect). Or, you can ask your local game warden or **wildlife biologist** (a person who studies wild animals). Another good place for information on hunting is your local library. One of the best ways to learn

## Key Words

Hunter Education  
Learning objectives  
Conservation  
Mentor  
Wildlife biologist

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Social benefit  
Ecological benefit

about hunting is to spend time with an experienced hunter you know and respect.

## A. What is the purpose of Hunter Education?

*"I know a lot about firearms. Why should I take Hunter Education?"*

The purpose of **Hunter Education** is to educate hunters to become:

- 🦌 **Safe** by following all firearm and hunting safety rules.
- 🦌 **Responsible** by knowing and following hunting laws and answering for your actions.
- 🦌 **Knowledgeable** about hunting, wildlife, firearms and proper field behavior.
- 🦌 **Involved** by joining hunting and conservation organizations.

Most U.S. states, Canadian provinces and Mexico require that people pass some type of Hunter Education course before they can buy a hunting license. Hunter Education programs are administered by state wildlife agencies and are taught by trained volunteer instructors.



## B. Who is responsible for administering Hunter Education courses and managing wildlife in Montana?

In Montana, **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks** is responsible for administering Hunter Education courses and managing wildlife. Most volunteer instructors are hunters who are dedicating their time to make sure you get a good start as a hunter. Show them respect and pay attention.

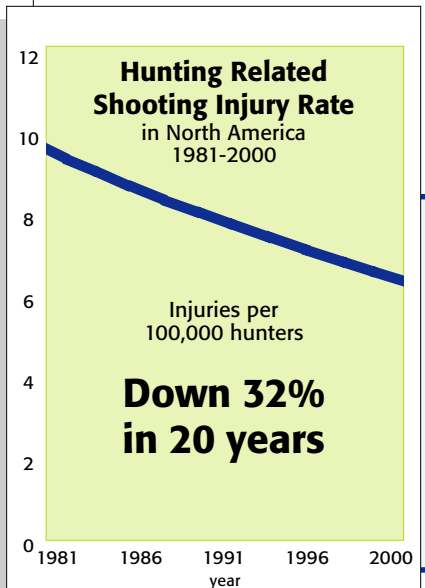
Montana Hunter Education classes are free to participants. Even though the instructors are volunteers, Hunter Educa-

### Hunting is safe, and becoming safer!

Over the last 20 years hunting accidents have dramatically decreased. Today, hunting is one of the safest outdoor activities.

#### Why is hunting becoming safer?

- **Hunting Regulations**, such as Montana's law requiring all big game hunters to wear 400 square inches of hunter orange above the waist visible at all times.
- **Hunter Education**, which is now required in the U.S. and Canada.





tion still costs money because manuals and other class materials are not free. Much of the money for wildlife management and Hunter Education comes from a tax placed on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. (See page 110 for more information.)

## C. Why is Hunter Education important?

### Hunting safely

What we call Hunter Education used to be called Hunter Safety. In 1949, New York became the first state to require young hunters to take a hunter safety course. Many hunters didn't know how to handle firearms safely and hunting accidents occurred at an alarming rate. To make hunting safer, experienced hunters organized classes to teach others basic safety techniques. It worked. There are now much fewer hunting accidents.

Montana began offering voluntary Hunter Education classes in the late 1940s, and in 1957 classes became mandatory, or required, for all hunters under the age of 18.

**Hunting is dangerous, isn't it?** You be the judge. Hunters just about everywhere have to take a safety course to get a license, and strict laws regulate when, where, what and how people can hunt. As a result, hunting now has one of the lowest accident rates of all types of recreation. Compare these figures:



Outdoor Activity	Number of Participants	Annual Injuries	Injuries per 100,000 Participants
Football	15,500,000	424,665	2,740
Bicycling	64,500,000	604,566	937
Swimming	60,300,000	130,286	216
Hunting-related Shooting	15,000,000	1,094	7

These figures don't mean that hunting isn't dangerous, but they do mean that accidents are less likely when we are educated about firearms and field safety and when we act responsibly.

### Hunting responsibly

Hunting, like the public view of it, has changed over the years. As a result, Hunter Education has had to change too. Safety is still a big part of Hunter Education, but today's classes also teach responsibility and respect.

### Hunter Education is important because it helps to:

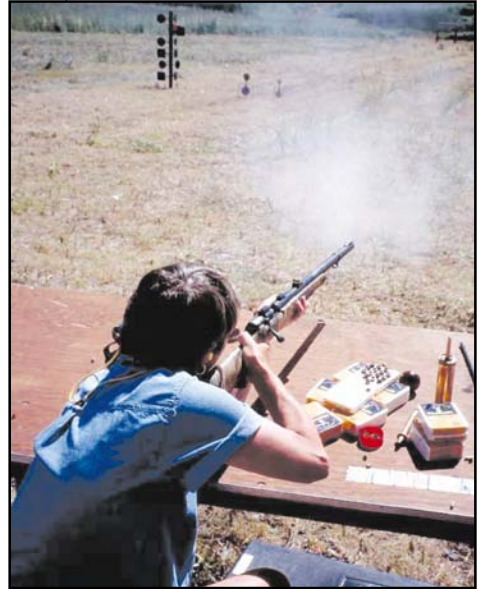
-  Prevent hunting and shooting accidents.
-  Improve hunter behavior to maintain public acceptance of hunting.

## Hunting knowledgeably and respectfully

Being a responsible hunter involves more than hunting and killing an animal safely. It also means knowing about and practicing **conservation**. Conservation-minded hunters support efforts to protect animal habitat and animal populations. In other words, we don't just take from the land, we give something back. We do this in part by helping with Montana's wildlife management programs, by following the laws and regulations, and by participating in hunter surveys sponsored by management agencies.

The responsible and respectful hunter also understands and respects the views of nonhunters. Many people have never hunted and don't understand what it's all about. Others simply disagree with hunting and killing animals. But in some instances, people who have nothing against hunting may have seen hunters doing things they don't like. Irresponsible and disrespectful behavior of a few hunters can affect the public's attitude toward all hunters. Those who are against hunting, for whatever reason, may close their land, vote for laws that limit hunting opportunities or try to ban hunting altogether.

To preserve hunting in Montana we all need to behave responsibly and respectfully—to the land, wildlife, the laws, and other people. Hunter Education provides you the tools and knowledge to do just that.








## D. Why we hunt

### Is hunting necessary?

For tens of thousands of years, humans, like other animals, hunted to survive. In many cases, we got our food, shelter, clothing and tools from the animals we killed. For our ancestors, a successful hunt meant the difference between life and death. Today we get our food from grocery stores, and we no longer need to hunt to provide ourselves with shelter, clothing or tools. But just because we no longer *need* to hunt for survival doesn't mean that hunting is no longer necessary or desirable. We could also survive without swimming or riding bikes, without playing basketball or spending time with friends.

There are many personal reasons why we hunt, and why we value hunting. Hunting allows us to:

-  Gather our own food.
-  Spend time with family and friends.
-  Participate in family and community traditions.
-  Learn about animals and plants.
-  Be a part of nature and the natural world.



***"I don't know—I just like it."***

Hunters enjoy hunting. They have some very deep feelings about hunting, but often find it difficult to express those feelings in ways others understand.

***"I hunt to relax and to get away from it all."*** Some people say the worst day hunting is better than the best day at work or school. Hunting takes your mind off your worries and gives you time to relax.

***"I hunt to learn about nature."*** In nature, every living thing is connected to others. When you hunt, you will see, hear, smell and feel things you have never experienced before.

***"I hunt because I like the adventure and challenge."*** Hunting challenges your woods' skills and tests your hardiness. Can you hike up to the area where the game crosses? Do you know how to read animal sign? Would you know what to do if you got lost?

***"I hunt because it gives me a sense of accomplishment."*** Becoming a good hunter takes skill. You must know how to read animal sign and walk silently in the woods. You must learn to pursue, harvest, field dress and cook game meat. You must learn about the animals you hunt, their behavior and habitats. Developing these skills gives you a sense of accomplishment.

***"I hunt because it keeps me healthy."*** Hunters must stay in shape. Keeping up with a bird dog, hiking hills or setting decoys keeps you active and in good physical shape.

***"I hunt to interact with nature."*** Calling game is a thrill. When a turkey gobbles in response to your call or a bull elk challenges your bugle, it is sure to send a shiver down your spine. Interacting with wild animals is a wonderful and rewarding experience.

***"I hunt with man's best friend."*** Owning and training a hunting dog will enrich your life. A good hunting dog is more than a dog—it's a hunting partner. Watching a dog work is an exciting reason to hunt.

- 🦌 Develop survival skills and self-reliance.
- 🦌 Exercise, relax, and get away from "the daily grind."
- 🦌 Explore wild places and feel the excitement of the chase.
- 🦌 Enjoy the taste of game meat.

There are as many reasons for hunting as there are hunters. In the column to the left are some of the ways people answered the question "Why do you hunt?"

Hunting also has **social** and **ecological benefits**. A **social benefit** is something that we do that is good for our society and for people. An **ecological benefit** is something that is good for nature. Hunting provides:

- 🦌 **Wildlife Management** — Healthy wildlife populations are important to everyone. Wildlife agencies depend on hunting to help manage wildlife populations.
- 🦌 **Funding for Wildlife** — Hunting licenses and taxes on hunting equipment contribute about \$800 million to the national economy annually. These funds provide an average of about \$2 million every day for wildlife management and research as well as Hunter Education.
- 🦌 **Jobs and Economic Activity** — Hunting supports more than 700,000 jobs in the U.S. alone. People spend over \$22 billion a year to go hunting. The average Montana hunter spends about \$1,000 each year on hunting trips, equipment and other hunting related goods or services.
- 🦌 **Community Support and Stability** — Many rural communities in Montana have a long tradition of hunting. The seasonal ritual of preparing for the hunt is a way of reestablishing ties that help to bind and sustain a community.



## Five Stages of the Hunter

Many hunters go through five stages. These are marked by changes in attitudes and feelings about hunting. Many of the things they enjoy about hunting are different in each stage including success. Each stage is a part of our development as a hunter.

### Stage one: The shooting stage

Many beginning hunters are excited to begin hunting. Often they want, more than anything, to be able to shoot an animal to test their skills. They often judge success by the amount of shooting they do. If you are in this stage, your first concern needs to be safety.

### Stage two: The limiting out stage

With practice it doesn't take long to get good at shooting. An experienced hunter can often take as many animals as the law allows. This is called "limiting out." They judge success by how many animals they bring home. Hunters in this stage need to remember the rules of safe gun handling, but they also need to follow carefully hunting laws and regulations, which tell you when you can hunt and how many animals you can take.

### Stage three: The selective stage

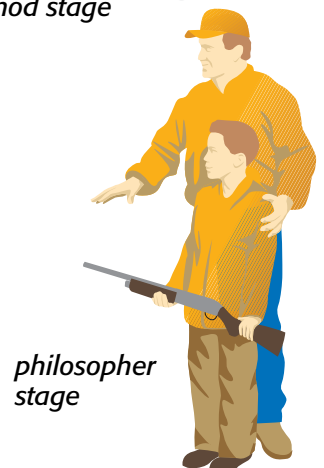
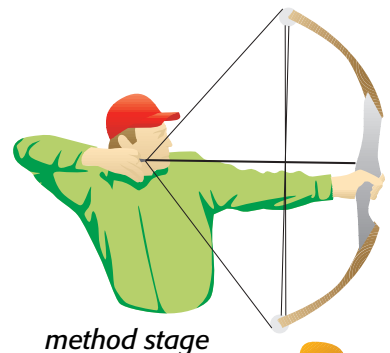
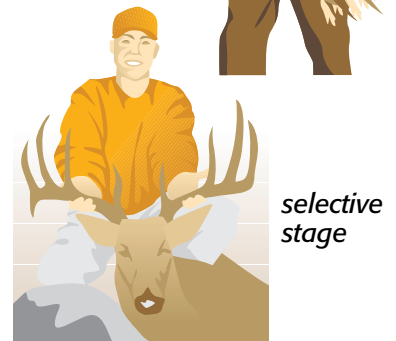
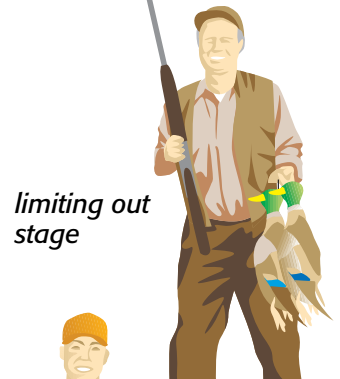
Selective hunters don't try to hunt for a lot of different animals. Usually, they're after one particular animal. This might be a white-tailed deer with a particular set of antlers or a mountain goat that's difficult to get to. Selective hunters challenge themselves by going after animals that are secretive or otherwise difficult to hunt. These hunters judge success by their ability to master a challenge.

### Stage four: The method stage

Some hunters chose a particular method to hunt such as bow hunting or muzzleloader hunting. These methods require hunters to get very close to an animal before they can take a shot. This makes hunting more difficult and more challenging. These hunters judge success by their ability to learn and master a particular method.

### Stage five: The philosopher stage

As many hunters mature and gain experience, they look back on a lifetime of hunting and find that what they enjoyed the most is not one single thing. Instead, it's a combination of many things. Hunters in this stage might enjoy simply getting out, taking an animal is not nearly as important. They enjoy passing on their knowledge to new hunters. These hunters judge success by how they feel about the entire hunting experience.



## **Chapter One Quiz**

1. The purpose of Hunter Education is to help hunters become safe, responsible, knowledgeable, and involved. (Mark the correct answer.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ true  
\_\_\_\_\_ false
  
2. Hunter Education is important because it: (Mark the correct answer(s).)  
\_\_\_\_\_ teaches hunters how to be safe.  
\_\_\_\_\_ teaches hunters how to behave responsibly.  
\_\_\_\_\_ takes a lot of time to complete.
  
3. Hunter education in Montana is funded or supported by: (Mark the correct answer(s).)  
\_\_\_\_\_ volunteers who teach classes.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, which develops class materials.  
\_\_\_\_\_ a tax that provides funding to buy class materials.  
\_\_\_\_\_ all of the above.
  
4. List four social and ecological benefits that hunting provides.  
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\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Why do you want to hunt? Give at least three reasons and explain them.  
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6. Give at least three reasons why it is especially important to behave respectfully and responsibly around nonhunters. Explain your answers.  
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